



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**CORY MASON**

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY  
62ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT  
*REPRESENTING THE GREATER RACINE COMMUNITY*

TO: Assembly Committee on Elections and Campaign Reform  
FROM: State Representative Cory Mason, 62nd Assembly District  
DATE: November 17, 2009  
RE: Assembly Bill 494, Methodology for Filing Campaign Finance Reports in Electronic Format

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Chairperson Smith and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for holding a public hearing today on a bill I authored, Assembly Bill 494, relating to the methodology for filing campaign finance reports in electronic format.

As you well know, numerous concerns have been raised about the Government Accountability Board (GAB)'s Campaign Finance Information System (CFIS). The oft-noted deficiencies in the CFIS system threaten to diminish public disclosure of campaign activities.

Like all other candidates and elected officials, I have now been required to use this system for the past two reports. One of the most frustrating aspects of the new CFIS system is the way in which it uploads campaign finance data. The spreadsheet made available by GAB was designed to make it as easy as possible for GAB staff to upload the data into CFIS. Unfortunately, the system gives no consideration to the ease of use for the campaign treasurers who report into the system. The system is counterintuitive, often incomprehensible, and, in a word, frustrating. Even worse, CFIS has been woefully unable to handle data uploads during those times pre-report deadline when usage is at its peak, making it impossible for candidates to comply with the campaign finance law and deadlines if they are using CFIS.

I introduced Assembly Bill 494 to address this specific problem with CFIS. This legislation aims to ensure that the public will have the ability to quickly and easily view candidate contributions, and to greatly simplify ease of entry and uploading for the system's users. This bill will allow candidates and campaign committees to once again file their campaign finance reports with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in a comma delimited format.

The effective functioning of CFIS is a critical component to maintaining the public's trust and confidence in our election system and in our democracy. Assembly Bill 494, which was introduced with bipartisan support, will help to strengthen our campaign finance system.

I applaud Chair Smith and this committee for their continued focus and hard work on these important issues. I look forward to the committee taking executive action in support of this bill and to its ultimate passage. Thank you.